OCTOBER 10, 2023

Remarks by President Biden on the Terrorist Attacks in Israel

State Dining Room

2:24 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon.

You know, there are moments in this life — and I mean this literally — when the pure, unadulterated evil is unleashed on this world.

The people of Israel lived through one such moment this weekend. The bloody hands of the terrorist organization Hamas — a group whose stated purpose for being is to kill Jews.

This was an act of sheer evil.

More than 1,000 civilians slaughtered — not just killed, slaughtered — in Israel. Among them, at least 14 American citizens killed.

Parents butchered using their bodies to try to protect their children.

Stomach-turning reports of being — babies being killed.

Entire families slain.

Young people massacred while attending a musical festival to celebrate peace — to celebrate peace.

Women raped, assaulted, paraded as trophies.

Families hid their fear for hours and hours, desperately trying to keep their children quiet to avoid drawing attention.

And thousands of wounded, alive but carrying with them the bullet holes and the shrapnel wounds and the memory of what they endured.

You all know these traumas never go away.

There are still so many families desperately waiting to hear the fate of their loved ones, not knowing if they're alive or dead or hostages.

Infants in their mothers' arms, grandparents in wheelchairs, Holocaust survivors abducted and held hostage — hostages whom Hamas has now threatened to execute in violation of every code of human morality.

It's abhorrent.

The brutality of Hamas — this bloodthirstiness — brings to mind the worst — the worst rampages of ISIS.

This is terrorism.

But sadly, for the Jewish people, it's not new.

This attack has brought to the surface painful memories and the scars left by a millennia of antisemitism and genocide of the Jewish people.

So, in this moment, we must be crystal clear: We stand with Israel. We stand with Israel. And we will make sure Israel has what it needs to take care of its citizens, defend itself, and respond to this attack.

There is no justification for terrorism. There is no excuse.

Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination. Its stated purpose is the annihilation of the State of Israel and the murder of Jewish people.

They use Palestinian civilians as human shields.

Hamas offers nothing but terror and bloodshed with no regard to who pays the price.

The loss of innocent life is heartbreaking.

Like every nation in the world, Israel has the right to respond — indeed has a duty to respond — to these vicious attacks.

I just got off the phone with — the third call with Prime Minister Netanyahu. And I told him if the United States experienced what Israel is experiencing, our response would be swift, decisive, and overwhelming.

We also discussed how democracies like Israel and the United States are stronger and more secure when we act according to the rule of law.

Terrorists purpo- — purposefully target civilians, kill them. We uphold the laws of war — the law of war. It matters. There's a difference.

Today, Americans across the country are praying for all those families that have been ripped apart. A lot of us know how it feels. It leaves a black hole in your chest when you lose family, feeling like you're being sucked in. The anger, the pain, the sense of hopelessness.

This is what they mean by a "human tragedy" — an atrocity on an appalling scale.

But we're going to s- — continue to stand united, supporting the people of Israel who are suffering unspeakable losses and opposing the hatred and violence of terrorism.

My team has been in near constant communication with our Israeli partners and partners all across the region and the world from the moment this crisis began.

We're surging additional military assistance, including ammunition and

interceptors to replenish Iron Dome.

We're going to make sure that Israel does not run out of these critical assets to defend its cities and its citizens.

My administration has consulted closely with Congress throughout this crisis. And when Congress returns, we're going to ask them to take urgent action to fund the national security requirements of our critical partners.

This is not about party or politics. This is about the security of our world, the security of the United States of America.

We now know that American citizens are among those being held by Hamas.

I've directed my team to share intelligence and deploy additional experts from across the United States government to consult with and advise the Israeli counterparts on hostage recover- — recovery efforts, because as president I have no higher priority than the safety of Americans being held hostage around the world.

The United States has also enhanced our military force posture in the region to strengthen our deterrence.

The Department of Defense has moved the USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group to the Eastern Mediterranean and bolstered our fighter aircraft presence. And we stand ready to move in additional assets as needed.

Let me say again — to any country, any organization, anyone thinking of taking advantage of this situation, I have one word: Don't. Don't.

Our hearts may be broken, but our resolve is clear.

Yesterday, I also spoke with the leaders of
France, Germany, Italy, and the UK to discuss the latest developments with our European allies and coordinate our united response.

This comes on top of days of steady engagement with partners across the

region.

We're also taking steps at home. In cities across the United States of America, police departments have stepped up security around centers for — of Jewish life.

And the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are working closely with state and local law enforcement and Jewish community partners to identify and disrupt any domestic threat that could emerge in connection with these horrific attacks.

This is a moment for the United States to come together, to grieve with those who are mourning.

Let's be real clear: There is no place for hate in America — not against Jews, not against Muslims, not against anybody. We reject — we reject — what we reject is terrorism. We condemn the indiscriminate evil, just as we've always done.

That's what America stands for.

You know, just over 50 years ago — I was thinking about it this morning, talking with the Secretary of State, the Vice President in my office and — over 50 years ago, as a young senator, I visited Israel for the first time, as a newly elected senator.

And I had a long, long trip — or meeting with Golda Meir in her office just before the Yom Kippur War. And I guess she could see the consternation on my face as she described what was being faced — they were facing.

We walked outside in that — that sort of hallway outside her office to have some photos. She looked at me and w- — all of a sudden and said, "Would you like to have a photograph?" And so, I got up and followed her out.

We were standing there silent, looking at the press. She could tell, I guess, I was concerned. She leaned over and whispered to me — she said, "Don't worry, Senator Biden. We have a secret weapon here in Israel" — my word this is what she said — "We have no place else to go." "We have no place else

to go."

For 75 years, Israel has stood as the ultimate guarantor of security of Jewish people around the world so that the atrocities of the past could never happen again.

And let there be no doubt: The United States has Israel's back.

We will make sure the Jewish and democratic State of Israel can defend itself today, tomorrow, as we always have. It's as simple as that.

These atrocities have been sickening.

We're — we're with Israel. Let's make no mistake.

Thank you.

2:34 P.M. EDT